

Putting together your PhD research proposal

The proposal should include any information that an academic reader with no prior knowledge of the project would need in order to assess its potential to make an original contribution to geographical research.

The proposal should be **1500 words** long (excluding bibliography), and include the following sections. (The word lengths for each section are indicative and may vary depending on the nature of the project).

Working title

Introduction (c150 words)

This should provide a brief introduction to the topic, identifying the main field and academic debates that your research relates to. You might want to refer to the ways in which your own background gives you competences in this area.

Academic Context/Review of the Literature (c500–700 words)

A PhD is an original piece of research, so you should be able to show a knowledge of the field in order to demonstrate that your proposed research has not been done before, how your work will build upon existing research, and its potential contribution to the field. Any literature should be fully cited, using the Harvard referencing system.

Research Aims/Questions (c100 words)

These may take the form of a hypothesis to be tested, or a more open-ended set of questions. If identifying multiple research questions these should be clearly related to each other. One of the keys to a successful PhD is identifying a manageable project that can explore an issue in sufficient depth – rather than too general/wide ranging a project/research questions.

Methodology (c500–700 words)

Your proposal should show that you are aware of the methodologies, and specific methods/techniques, appropriate to your research questions. Your outline methodology should provide a clearly reasoned and realistic research design including: a clear justification of your chosen methodology (whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed); a description of your chosen research methods/techniques (are these appropriate? why these methods rather than others?); the identification of your main sources of data; and an outline account of your proposed data analysis. You should also consider the ethical implications of your research and identify any potential difficulties in collecting your data.

Dissemination (c100 words)

Briefly outline the main potential users of your research, and any dissemination strategies you have.

Timetable for Research

This should set out the key stages of your research through the 3 year period, paying particular attention to the timetable associated with any field work/data collection.

Bibliography

You should include a complete list of citations, using the Harvard referencing system. You do not need to include this bibliography in the word count.